

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**APPLYING THE 'FORWARD STRATEGY OF FREEDOM' TO TUNISIA:
A CASE STUDY IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM**

by

Colonel Robert B. Newman
United States Army

Dr. Tami Davis Biddle
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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President George W. Bush has announced "a forward strategy of freedom" in calling for the countries of the Middle East to democratize and allow greater freedom for their citizens in order to win the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Secretary of State Colin Powell has recently visited Tunisia and applied this new strategy there, while committing the U.S. to support political and economic reform in Tunisia. This paper will look at what the next steps should be for both the U.S. and Tunisia in applying that strategy. It will argue that Tunisia is a country that should take more risks in its approach to increasing opportunities for political participation. That will entail ending the organized repression of all opposition movements, but especially of the Islamists who have constituted the major opposition in Tunisia, as well as other Arab-Muslim countries, where the authoritarian regime decided not to attempt to co-opt them. The U.S. Government should encourage and reward those efforts at democratic reform.

The focus of this paper will be an attempt to describe how Tunisia has dealt with its Islamist opposition in the past, and how it is dealing with the impact of events in neighboring Algeria. It will also explain that a change in policy is necessary because in Tunisia, as well as elsewhere in the Arab-Muslim world, the U.S. is blamed for repression and for the lack of democratization because of its support for repressive governments. It will argue that it is important for the U.S. to actively assist Tunisia and other nations deal with the roots of popular discontent, rather than to merely focus on developing closer cooperation in the GWOT. This is necessary not only because of the events of 11 September 2001, but because the level of repression in Tunisia may soon reach the point where it provokes political explosion.

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APPLYING THE 'FORWARD STRATEGY OF FREEDOM' TO TUNISIA: A CASE STUDY IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe, because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo.¹

—President George W. Bush, 6 November 2003

On the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy on 6 November 2003, President George W. Bush spoke these words to announce a new policy: "a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East." Bush's words were echoed by Vice President Richard Cheney in his remarks to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on 24 January 2004. Cheney appeared to add an additional commitment from the United States, as well as a request for European assistance, stating: "Our forward strategy for freedom commits us to support those who work and sacrifice for reform across the greater Middle East. We call upon our democratic friends and allies everywhere, and in Europe, in particular, to join us in this effort."²

These speeches may be the harbingers of a new approach to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) that is to be modeled on the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which developed into a mechanism for human rights and fundamental freedoms to be encouraged in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. In a 9 February 2004 article that quoted many administration and State Department background sources, journalists Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post* described this "Greater Middle East Initiative"-- a master plan may be proposed at a series of summits that will occur in June 2004 of the Group of Eight nations, NATO, and the European Union.³ At the same time that talks have begun with key European allies about this initiative, the administration has also apparently attempted to take the initial steps to apply this strategy to a country in the region, Tunisia.

'LEARNING TO LIVE WITH MORE RISK'

In his recent five-part series, "War of Ideas," New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman declared that in order to succeed in the GWOT, we must "learn to live with more risk," and to "partner with the forces of moderation within these societies [the Arab-Muslim world] to help them fight the war of ideas" because "only they can really restrain their extremists."⁴ The United States' new 'forward strategy of freedom,' or 'Greater Middle East Initiative,' will require

that the U.S. and its allies work more closely with countries like Tunisia. This paper will argue that Tunisia is a country that should take more risks in its approach to increasing opportunities for political participation. That will entail ending the organized repression of all opposition movements, but especially of the Islamists who have constituted the major opposition in all those Arab-Muslim countries, such as Tunisia, where the authoritarian regime decided not to attempt to co-opt them. The U.S. and its allies should encourage and reward those efforts.

This paper will attempt to describe how Tunisia has dealt with its Islamist opposition in the past, as well as the influence of events in neighboring Algeria. It will also explain that political reform is necessary because in Tunisia, as well as elsewhere in the Arab-Muslim world, the U.S. is blamed for repression and for the lack of democratization because of its support for repressive governments. It will argue that, because of the events of 11 September 2001, it is important for the U.S. to encourage the Tunisian government to deal with the roots of popular discontent, and for the U.S. government to develop closer cooperation with the Tunisian government in the GWOT, and that this outweighs the considerable risks that are involved for both Tunisia and the U.S.

APPLYING THE STRATEGY TO TUNISIA

On December 2, 2003, United States' Secretary of State Colin Powell met with Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunis. At the press conference following the meeting Powell praised Tunisia's political and economic progress to date, but clearly implying that there was more to be done, stated:

Tunisia has already accomplished much through its own reforms by recognizing the rights of women, modernizing its education system, resulting in one of the highest literacy rates in the world, opening up a private radio station, and recently releasing a journalist from detention. I have encouraged Tunisian leaders that I met today to continue the process of political reform and economic change so as to bring new opportunities to the people of Tunisia.⁵

Powell's comments at the beginning of a whirlwind tour through North Africa appeared to capture the essence of President Bush's call for Arab countries to democratize and allow greater freedom for their citizens, as well as a specific commitment to Tunisia to assist in supporting political and economic reform. Fielding a question from a reporter about President Ben Ali's willingness to engage in broader democratic and human rights reform, Powell indicated that his meeting may have been quite different than most of Ben Ali's previous meetings with senior American diplomats. Powell pointed out that he had a "good, candid conversation" with Ben Ali, covering such topics as the "right to an education," and the "right of women to enter all aspects of society." But he indicated as well that the discussion also dealt

with difficult issues such as the “need for open press, open media,” stressing that “people are still expecting more to happen with respect to political reform and with respect to openness in society.”⁶ Powell stated that Ben Ali responded that “he wanted to move at a pace that he believed was consistent with the aspirations and desires and expectations of the Tunisian people.”⁷ Although these words may sound mild, these comments and the similar ones which were echoed by President Bush on 18 February 2004 in Washington, would mark the first human rights challenges which have been issued to an Arab leader who was actively supporting the U.S. in GWOT.

THE TUNISIAN MIRACLE, AN ARAB COUNTRY THAT WORKS

Tunisia is a Middle East country that is in a relatively enviable position, with respect to its North African neighbors, to make more progress in democratization. Tunisia's reputation in the West is as the Arab country that works. Its population is 9.7 million; it has an export-oriented market economy, where more than 60 percent of its citizens are in the middle class, and only 4.2 percent fall below the poverty line.⁸ Tunisia has very limited petroleum resources, and still has high unemployment, particularly among skilled workers, the poor, youth and women. Tunisia's expenditures on its military and the size of its military are much smaller than any other country in the region in both percentage and absolute terms. Illinois State University Professor of Sociology Valentine Moghadam assesses that: "Among the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, only Tunisia has established social programs to tackle poverty, increase employment through public works, and encourage employment among women."⁹

Tunisia formally gained its independence from France on 20 March 1956. Its transition to independence was relatively peaceful, especially when compared to the turbulent and bloody path followed by its neighbor Algeria, where over half a million French troops were engaged in fighting that lasted for over seven years. From 1956 to 1987, Tunisia was ruled by President Habib Bourguiba, who was known as 'le combattant supreme' or supreme warrior, for his singular contributions to Tunisian independence. The political history of this period is dominated by the creation of a modern secular state characterized by the one-party rule of Bourguiba's Neo-Destour Party, which he renamed the Destour Socialist Party in 1965, and which Ben Ali transformed into the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD- Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique) in 1988. Tunisia was characterized by Bourguiba's attempts to move closer to Europe as he banned polygamy, strengthened women's rights, introduced birth control, further developed an education system on the French model, and even encouraged Tunisians not to fast for the entire month of Ramadan. Bourguiba liked to refer to this political system as a

“controlled democracy.”¹⁰ This was perhaps a reference to his belief that democracy would only be able to progress at a controlled rate until there was sufficient education, culture and social progress.

Although there were a few movements towards democratization, by the mid-1980's, Bourguiba became engaged in a vicious battle with the Islamist opposition, and the economy was in dire straits. Unfortunately, Bourguiba stayed on the political stage too long, especially during his later role as “President-for-life,” In his 2001 *Middle East Journal* article entitled “Bourguibism Revisited,” Princeton University Professor Emeritus L. Carl Brown notes that: “Bourguibism as an effective political philosophy for a small state living in a harsh and at times threatening international environment has applicability beyond the life and career of the man who gave it the name...It is poignant that the man who accomplished so much stayed on too long and thus contributed to the unraveling of his masterwork.”¹¹

Current President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's rule was initially characterized by risk-taking. He took power on 7 November 1987 in a bloodless coup that replaced 85-year old Habib Bourguiba. Historians call this coup a 'constitutional' or 'medical' coup d'etat because then Prime Minister Ben Ali took great pains to document, and to demonstrate to both Tunisia and the world, that President Bourguiba was being replaced because of his senility in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The timing of Ben Ali's declaration that Bourguiba was no longer able to perform his constitutional duties was not accidental. In addition to showing signs of senility, Bourguiba had also indicated to his new Prime Minister Ben Ali that he wanted to retry imprisoned Islamist leader Rachid Ghannouchi in order to change his sentence to death. Bourguiba had declared war on the Islamists, and as a result the Islamists had planned a coup d'etat in order to change the regime. Ghannouchi critic Muhammad Hamdi describes these events and notes their significance saying that: "Thus it seemed that everything was in place to execute an extraordinary plan that may have brought about the Arab world's first Islamist government."¹²

The history of the Tunisian Islamist movement is centered on the history of the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI- Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique), which was founded in 1981. In 1988 MTI became known as Hizb al Nahda (Renaissance Party, can also be transliterated into English Ennahda), in order to attempt to meet Ben Ali's requirement that political parties be separated from religious influences. To a large extent both MTI and al Nahda are identified by the changing ideologies of Rachid Ghannouchi, who has been the nominal President of MTI/Nahda for most of this time period, and has been living in London since 1992. Just like Bourguiba and Ben Ali, Ghannouchi's strong personality is at the center of the Tunisian political

debate. For the last thirty years he has personified the Tunisian opposition, particularly in the eyes of the West. He has been in voluntary exile in London since May 1989.

BEN ALI: "WE SAY NO TO THOSE WHO MIX RELIGION AND POLITICS"

Most Western accounts of this period state that Ben Ali has attempted to be as "democratic as possible," in a country that had grown accustomed to a system of "presidential democracy." By the end of November 1987, Ben Ali had arrested 191 persons, including 57 military personnel, on charges of fomenting a plot that was apparently designed as a coup d'etat following the assassination of numerous leading governmental officials and attacks on civilian and military targets. He would later release those personnel over the next two years, along with over 2500 persons who were held in jail or house arrest for Islamic activities.¹³ He also allowed Amnesty International to open an office in Tunis.¹⁴

A series of events between 1989 and 1991 would result in a reversal of Ben Ali's tactics for dealing with the Islamists. In the 2 April 1989 general elections, the RCD would win 79.75 percent of the vote and all the seats which were at stake. These elections marked the end of any role for the secular opposition parties, and greatly encouraged the Islamists, as Al Nahda formally assumed the mantle of being the focal point for opposition to over 30 years of one-party rule. Mohammed Hamdi identifies the 12 June 1990 election victory of the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut, Islamic Salvation Front) party in Algeria, and Saddam Hussein's 2 August 1990 invasion of Iraq as the two other main events which encouraged the Islamists to take chances and show their hand.¹⁵ The events in Algeria are well-documented, but there is still debate over whether they were inevitable or not. On the day after the first round of legislative elections the Algerian military became concerned that the people had 'voted unwisely' for the FIS, and cancelled the elections. The FIS was disbanded in March 1992, and the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armeé, Armed Islamic Group) would evolve, as Algeria slid into a five year cycle of violence in which an estimated 60,000 people died. In Tunisia, as well as throughout the Islamic world, the Islamists would be encouraged by the events in Algeria prior to the cancellation of election results. The invasion of Kuwait was also perceived as one of those events that could possibly mobilize the people, just as Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran had captured the imagination of the Islamic world in 1978.

The Tunisian government was probably afraid enough of the Islamists that it had already decided that it must act against Al Nahda and the Islamists. Although many may argue now that the fear of an Islamist takeover was exaggerated, it was certainly not perceived to be so at that time. In May 1990, Professor Abdul Bekhi Hermassi, then an expert on Islamic fundamentalism

at the University of Tunisia, would say: "If Tunisia is to become a real democracy, then the Islamists must be allowed to take part in the process, but they must never, never be allowed to rule on their own."¹⁶

The major event that allowed the government to react was a firebomb attack against an RCD office in the Tunis suburb of Bab Souika that would seriously injure two RCD employees. Ghannouchi's official biographer, Azzam Tamimi, describes this event as "an arson attack... [That] was seized upon by the government as proof of the violent and anti-democratic nature of Ennahda...although the authorities could not prove the movement's involvement; sensational reports in the government-controlled press were used by the government to split the leadership of Ennahda."¹⁷ Professor Abdul Bekhi Hermassi, while serving as Ben Ali's Minister of Culture, in a 1997 interview gave indications that the Tunisian government may have been looking for any provocation to justify a reaction, as he explained that: "...the Bab Souika attack [February 1991] was the turning point...the Islamists showed they could not succeed in the electoral process and had adopted a policy of violence...it was a major mistake by the Islamists and the regime exploited it intelligently."¹⁸ Georgetown University Professor John Esposito, one of the West's leading experts on the Islamists, summarizes this period, saying: "Tunisia's Renaissance Party provides an example of the radicalization of movements in response to government manipulation of the political system, suppression, or violence. ...increased government repression intimidates, factionalizes, and radicalizes."¹⁹

Despite the harsh words in the opening quotation in this paper from President George W. Bush, it was much easier to justify "excusing a accommodating the lack of freedom" in authoritarian countries like Tunisia during the Cold War. A series of U.S. Ambassadors were put in the position of having to accept whatever 'Bourguibism' meant at that particular moment in time, with its "socialism, slogans, over sensitivity to criticism, diplomatic errors and the stubborn hope for a better future."²⁰ A swift comparison with the rest of the non-Western world during the Cold War and the period of de-colonialization made it easy for these same ambassadors to honestly justify Bourguiba's "one-man, on-party rule as a necessary step in forging a nation after years of French colonial rule," or Ben Ali's version of authoritarianism which followed.²¹ However, in the case of Tunisia it is now time for democratization to have a priority over stabilization. Again as many have observed, the current situation in Tunisia breeds the same sort of terrorists who played key roles in 9/11:

IS THE 'CALM' OVER?

During the period of open warfare in the 1990's with 'Jihadist Salafis' that occurred in Algeria, Egypt, and even in the streets of Paris, Tunisia was often described by Western observers as an "oasis of calm."²² The policies of the Tunisian government were judged as preferable to the violence that was ongoing in neighboring Algeria and Egypt. On 11 April 2002 the 'calm' was interrupted when an attack occurred at an ancient Jewish synagogue on the Tunisian island of Jerba; it killed 19 people, 12 of them German tourists. Initially, Tunisian officials investigating the blast denied any al Qa'ida involvement, until German investigators arrived on the scene. Now French and Tunisian intelligence officials suspect that a Tunisian who was killed in the attack, Nizar Nasr Nawar, may have "built ties with the former Tunisian opposition party Ennahda" in Canada, as well as with radical Algerians.²³ There was now no doubt that Tunisians and Tunisia itself were involved in the GWOT.

In the past some have noted that the relative absence of violence in Tunisia may have been due to the absence of Afghan veterans.²⁴ However, the focus of researchers since 9/11 has been on the role that individual Tunisians, many with reported ties to MTI/AI Nahda, have played in other terrorist incidents or plots in Europe and Afghanistan. One of the assassins of the leader of the Afghan Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Masood, in the attack that set the stage for 9/11, was reportedly a former member of Al Nahda. Another Tunisian, Tarek Maaroufi, who was arrested in Belgium in December 2001, was charged with "providing stolen passports and false visas to the killers of Ahmad Shah Massood, " and of being a founder of the a new Jihadist Salafi group called the Tunisian Combat Group or Tunisian Islamic Fighting Group.²⁵ There is also the case of former Tunisian professional soccer player Nizar Trabelsi, who was arrested on 13 September 2001, and convicted by a Belgian court on 30 September 2003 of preparing an al Qa'ida attack on a NATO base in Belgium.²⁶ There is also Ihsan Garnaoui, who was arrested in March 2003 in Berlin, and is accused of wanting to start a terrorist group in Germany and reportedly was in possession of aerial photographs of 170 German towns, and especially of nuclear facilities and chemical factories.²⁷

PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

The U.S. should quickly shift gears in Tunisia, and throughout the region. U.S. policy in Tunisia prior to Secretary Powell's December 2003 visit can be largely summarized by the rhetoric of Ambassador Robert Pelletreau, who in 1997 was serving as Assistant Secretary of State and made an official visit to Tunisia. He stated in a 17 June 1997 interview with the

Tunisian daily newspaper *Elhouruk*, that Tunisia is a “model for developing countries,” and that he is “convinced of President Ben Ali’s commitment to opening [up the political system].”²⁸

If Tunisia is to continue as a model it will need greater resources and fuller engagement from the West. The effort to effect democratization is under resourced. The U.S. is the largest provider of financial assistance to Tunisia, and has provided approximately 2 billion dollars in U.S. military and economic aid to Tunisia since independence, with little economic aid since 1991. The FY 2005 budget request includes \$10 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and \$1.875 million in funding for International Military Education and Training (IMET). The FMF is supposed to “support Tunisia’s efforts to secure its porous borders from terrorist threats.”²⁹ The only economic assistance in the FY 2005 Budget Request is included in the \$150 million for the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) which was launched in April 2003 to “support political and education reform and economic development in the region.”³⁰ The Administration has also doubled the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) budget to \$80 million “specifically to create a Greater Middle East Leadership and Democracy Initiative.”³¹ However, none of the funds requested for the MEPI or NED are specifically earmarked for Tunisia, and must be shared among programs sponsored by all countries in the region that are approved to benefit from these funds.

The U.S. is going to need to restructure its mechanisms for providing international assistance, if it wants to be effective. Mark Brzezinski, a National Security Council staff member during the Clinton administration, recently provided a series of “Democracy lessons” from the transition from Eastern Europe, as he commented on the Administration’s ‘Greater Middle East Initiative.’ Many of these lessons highlight the differences in the “starting point” between the Middle East and Central Europe in terms of available leadership, and “experience with democracy, a free press and relatively liberal economic policies” in the pre-World War II period.³² However, the most important lessons for the U.S. may be the controls on economic assistance that will be necessary in order to maximize its impact. Brzezinski argues that the “West must use its aid carefully...some help should be conditional on guarantees of stable legal processes and constitutional structures. Framing assistance that way resulted in important gains in Central Europe...direct injections of cash to the coffers of corrupt elites only perpetuate problems.”³³

It remains to be seen if this administration is serious about this strategy, or understands that it will require much more of a multilateral approach than the U.S. has been capable of since 11 September 2001. The ‘U.S. officials’ who are responsible for coordinating support for the administration’s ‘Greater Middle East Initiative’ with key European allies, supposedly are trying

to “avoid creating committees and structures to strictly monitor progress and issue report cards,” in order to “avoid appearing to dictate to the Islamic world.”³⁴ However, those are exactly the structures which, as noted by Mark Brzezinski, may have resulted in the success of the 1975 Helsinki Accords in promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. The proposed incentives for cooperation by target countries all depend on enhanced international cooperation in order to be effective: expanded political engagement, increased aid, facilitated membership in the World Trade Organization and security arrangements.

The European Union established its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Initiative (EMPI, or the Barcelona Declaration) in 1995 at the EU's Barcelona conference.³⁵ Tunisia was the first North African country to sign an association with the EU in 1995. The EMPI's goals center on establishing an “ambitious political/security, economic and cultural partnership among countries on both sides of the Mediterranean.”³⁶ However, real progress on the political/security issues was hampered by the lack of EU involvement in the Middle East Peace Process, which was not altogether surprising since the “U.S. was deliberately excluded from membership in the EMPI,” and the economic goals were not met when the EU refused to open its agricultural markets to Maghreb products.³⁷ Those failures made it difficult for the EU countries, despite pressures from the human rights lobby, to put pressure on Tunisia and the other countries to improve their human rights' records, when it was critical for them to cooperate in fighting terrorism.

EMPI appears to be another framework besides the Helsinki Accords upon which the U.S. can base the new ‘Greater Middle East Initiative,’ and there appears to be plenty of incentive for the EU and the U.S. to cooperate. Professor Pia Christina Wood of Wake Forest University offered a differing viewpoint in June 2002, arguing that “while the European Parliament may well continue to be critical of Ben Ali's record on human rights, the EU Council and Commission are unlikely to curtail their economic support for Tunisia over this issue...their concerns are focused on terrorism, political stability and the need for economic growth.”³⁸ However, it is not clear whether she would have the same opinion today, especially if there were some indications of cooperation between the U.S. and its European allies. The migratory issues involving the movement of possible terrorists throughout the EU which resulted from the GIA's open war on France in the mid-90's are exactly the same issues which the U.S. has been suddenly grappling with in the aftermath of 9/11. On the economic front, the goal of EMPI was to create a vast free-trade area. The EU has been grappling with the issue of providing economic assistance to the Maghreb countries, and in the case of Tunisia, to the “estimated 30% of Tunisian businesses that will go under” if Tunisia continues to progressively reduce its tariffs to zero by 2010.³⁹ The EU and U.S. desperately need for EMPI to succeed in the security sphere. The EU needs U.S.

cooperation in the area of providing economic assistance to Tunisia, and the primary incentive for Tunisia and other EMPI nations to participate in reforming their political systems will be increased economic access to EU markets and foreign investment.

France was one of the leading architects of the EMPI, and considers that it has a “special relationship” with Tunisia and the North African countries that were once part of its colonial empire. France is Tunisia’s largest trading partner, and the biggest foreign investor in Tunisia. There are 12,500 French citizens living in Tunisia and an estimated 300,000 Tunisians living in France.⁴⁰ The initial French reaction to Secretary Powell’s 2 Dec 2003 visit to Tunisia was relatively positive in terms of recent Franco-American diplomatic experiences. The multilateral aspects of this endeavor were apparent as French President Jacques Chirac arrived the next day for a scheduled two-day visit. Chirac had many more opportunities for public statements in which he praised Tunisia’s progress and did not offer any criticism of its human rights record, which resulted in extensive criticism in the French press. However, when asked in a press conference in Tunis on 3 December 2003 about “Franco-American competition in this French zone of influence,” Chirac took great care to state that he saw no competition and that “we [France and U.S.] have a complementary vision for the relationship between Europe and the Maghreb.”⁴¹

RISKS

Thomas Friedman has challenged us to ‘learn to live with more risk.’ There are indeed risks to the U.S. and to Tunisia in adopting and supporting this ‘Forward Strategy of Freedom.’ President Bush implied that the risks of future terrorist attacks outweighed those of possible instability which might arise from either democratization itself, or of putting pressure on regimes to democratize that might result in some lessening of their cooperation with the U.S. Ambassador David Newsom, a diplomat with extensive experience in the Arab-Muslim world, was much more specific in identifying the risks, noting that “strong Islamist governments...could emerge,” and concluding that “President Bush spoke of the march to democracy...and he emphasized the benefits to all of internal democratic reforms...he didn’t address what foreign policies the new democratic governments in the Middle East might adopt.”⁴² Newsom criticizes this “critical omission” and correctly predicts that “the ultimate credibility of the president’s Middle East democracy initiative will depend on the degree to which US administrations, Congress, and the public can tolerate or peacefully change policy directions that appear to challenge key US interests.”⁴³

For Tunisian President Ben Ali, the risk of allowing greater freedom of the press, and increasing participation in the political process, is the possibility of a change in regime. In May 2003, President Ben Ali's proposal to change the constitution to allow him to run for a fourth term as president and extend the age limit to 75 was approved by referendum. Ben Ali has stated: "In my opinion there is not much difference between those you call "moderates" and "extremists." Their final goal is the same, to form a theocratic and authoritarian state."⁴⁴ At this point there is no incentive for Ben Ali to initiate any political reform. The U.S. is going to have to be willing to work with its European allies to create those incentives, and then to apply them as it pressures Tunisia to reform. Most Tunisians have been taught to believe that the unknown authoritarian state that might result from allowing increased political participation is still probably worse than their current authoritarian state. The U.S. and its allies must also convince the Tunisian people that the benefits of change outweigh the risks.

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ENDNOTES

¹ George W. Bush, "Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 10 November 2003, Vol 39, Iss. 45, 1542; [database on-line], available from ProQuest; accessed 31 January 2004.

² Richard Cheney, "Remarks by the Vice President to the World Economic Forum;" available from <<http://whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040124-1.html>>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2004.

³ Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler, "Bush Aims For 'Greater Mideast' Plan," *The Washington Post*; 9 February 2004; [database on-line]; available from EarlyBird; Internet; accessed 9 February 2004.

⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, "War of Ideas, Part 1," *The New York Times*, 8 January 2004, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/08/opinion/08FRIE.html>>; Internet; accessed 19 January 2004.

⁵ Colin Powell, "Press Availability in Tunisia;" 2 December 2003; available from <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2003/26808.htm>>; Internet; accessed 8 February 2004.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Tunisia, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, available from <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18290.htm>>; Internet; accessed 19 January 2004.

⁹ Valentine M. Moghadam, "Population Growth, Urbanization, and Unemployment," in *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah J. Gerner and Jillian Schwedler (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 292.

¹⁰ Borowiec, 24.

¹¹ L. Carl Brown, "Bourguiba and Bourguibism Revisited: Reflections and Interpretation," *The Middle East Journal*; Vol. 55, No. 1, Winter 2001; 57.

¹² Mohamed Elhachmi Hamdi, *The Politicisation of Islam: A Case Study of Tunisia*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 58.

¹³ Andrew Borowiec, *Modern Tunisia: A Democratic Apprenticeship* (Wesport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), 44.

¹⁴ Borowiec, 71-74.

¹⁵ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶ Abdul Bekhi Hermassi, "Economic Woes Fuel Protests in Tunisia," *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 May 1990, 4; (on-line database) Pro-Quest; accessed on 3 February 2004.

¹⁷ Ibid., 71.

¹⁸ Hermassi in Borowiec, 47.

¹⁹ John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 163.

²⁰ An April 1967 American Embassy, Tunis cable quoted in Borowiec, 33.

²¹ Ibid., 33.

²² David Lamb, "A Nice Place in a Bad Neighborhood," *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 August 1995, 1 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 November 2003.

²³ Chris Hedges, "Tunisian Killed in Synagogue Blast Was Unlikely Convert to Militancy," *The New York Times*, 9 June 2002 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 November 2003.

²⁴ See Mohammed A. El-Khawas, "Revolutionary Islam in North Africa: Challenges and responses," *Africa Today*, Oct/Dec 1996, Vol. 43, Iss. 4; 385 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 November 2003.

²⁵ "Assets of Tunisia Group are Frozen," *The New York Times*, 11 October 2002, A-19 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 November 2003.

²⁶ "Dix ans de prison pour Nizar Trabelsi, qui avait prepare un attentat pour al-Qaida a Bruxelles," *Le Monde*, 1 October 2003; <<http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3214,36-3361789,0.html>>; Internet; accessed on 16 February 2004.

²⁷ "Al-Qaida: un Tunisien accuse en Allemagne d'avoir foulu fonder un groupe terroriste," *Jeune Afrique*, 16 January 2004; available from <<http://www.lintelligent.com/gabarais/articleAFP>>; Internet; accessed on 24 January 2004.

²⁸ Borowiec, 137.

²⁹ Department of State, "FY 2005 International Affairs (Function 150) Budget Request;" available from <<http://www.state.gov/m/rm/rls/iab/>>; Internet; accessed on 16 February 2004.

³⁰ Office of Management and Budget, "FY 2005 Budget Request: Department of State and International Assistance Programs;" available from <<http://whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2005/state.html>>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2004.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mark Brzezinski, "The Mideast on Europe's Path," *International Herald Tribune*, 16 February 2004; available at <<http://www.ihf.com/articles/129688.html>>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2004.

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³⁴ Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler.

³⁵ For a detailed discussion of French and EU policy towards Tunisia, see Pia Christina Wood, "French foreign policy and Tunisia: Do human rights matter?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 9, Iss. 2 (June 2002); 92 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 23 November 2003.

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³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Republique Francaise, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, "Tunisie, Fiche de presentation," Mai 2001; available from <<http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/actual/evenements/tunisie/presentation.html>>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2004.

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⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ben Ali in a 2 August 1994 interview with *Le Figaro*, quoted in Hamdi, 73.

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